

device 54, a marker 55, and a counter 56.

The image receiver 51 receives images taken of object commodities which images are taken by the camera section 20 at the shop, and the management display 53 displays the taken images, which have been received by the image receiver 51. The operator (the inventory employee, the inventory operator) that operates the remote management apparatus 50 makes arrangements for an inventory of the object commodities, while viewing the taken images of the object commodities, which images are displayed on the management display 53. The instruction transmitter 52 transmits the operator's instructions to the in-shop terminal 10 if the operator intends to instruct a clerk at the shop after seeing the taken images of the object commodities.

The pointing device 54, the marker 55, and the counter 56 serve to assist the operator at the remote management apparatus 50 in making arrangements for an inventory of the object commodities.

The pointing device 54 points to an individual object commodity in the taken images displayed on the management display 53.

The marker 55 labels an image taken of an individual object commodity, which image has been

pointed to by the pointing device 54, with either one of a predetermined mark and a predetermined special mark other than the predetermined mark, which are selectively switched by a manner of operated the pointing device 54 are as the labeling. The predetermined special marks are allocated to particular object commodities, as described later. The predetermined marks are allocated to object commodities other than particular object commodities previously referred to.

The counter 56 counts the number of times that the pointing device 54 has been operated to automatically count the number of commodities to which the predetermined marks or the predetermined special marks have been allocated.

A marked image, in which one or more particular object commodities have been labeled with predetermined special marks by the marker 55, is returned to the shop by the instruction transmitter 52 together with instructions from the operator, in the illustrated embodiment. The marked image is received by the instruction receiver 12 in the shop, and displayed on the in-shop display 16 so that a shop clerk sees the marked image to make arrangements for various processes as instructed by the operator.

The camera section 20 may also serve as a security camera, which has usually been installed

in the shop previously. The remote management apparatus 50 may be a mobile information terminal operated by the operator, and may be installed at a remote place in a different time zone from the time zone where the shop is located.

In the tele-inventory system 100 of the illustrated example, a plurality of customer information terminals 70, each operated by an individual customer of the shop, are communicably connected to the in-shop terminal 10 (the image transmitter 11 and the instruction receiver 12). When the instruction receiver 12 of the in-shop terminal 10 receives a direction containing the name of a target commodity from the customer information terminal 70, the camera control section 13 reads, from the database 14, commodity information with respect to the target commodity based on the direction, and controls the camera section 20 in such a manner that the camera section 20 takes an image of the target commodity. Then the image transmitter 11 transmits the image of the target commodity, which image has been taken by the camera section 20, to the customer information terminal 70.

(A-2) Practical mode of the tele-inventory system:

A practical mode of the tele-inventory system